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An innovative kindergarten program was established as a federally funded project to pursue the following objectives: (1) to discover and develop the potential ability of each child, (2) to develop feelings of autonomy and self-worth, (3) to provide experiences for developing inquiring attitudes and for development of self-confidence and positive self-concepts, (4) to provide an accepting climate, (5) to develop a multisensory approach in terms of activities and materials, and (6) to involve children and parents in meaningful activities. Approximately 500 children who would have been assigned to seven local elementary schools were brought to this child development center for kindergarten. An early childhood education consultant was assigned to coordinate the program and act as a liaison between the center and parents. An oral communication specialist, a learning and materials specialist, paraprofessionals, and a psychologist were assigned to the project. Unique features included a reading program, a boys' center emphasizing gross motor activity, a language laboratory, and an instructional materials center. The curriculum was focused on perceptual skills (motor and visual), cognitive, language, and social skills, and on communication of attitudes and feelings. The staff committed themselves to the thesis that excellence in education must begin before children reach graded education. (DO)

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INKSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IMPLEMENT CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

FORWARD

"Making a difference" for the kindergarten aged child in the Inkster, Michigan Public Schools is the purpose of the Lincoln Child Development Center. If, in fact, as indicated by some of the latest research in social psychology...

> The (lower-class) child probably enters school with a nebulous and essentially neutral attitude. His home rarely if ever negatively predisposes him toward the school situation, though it might not offer positive motivation and correct interpretation of the school experience. It is in the school situation that the highly charged negative attitudes toward learning evolve, and the responsibility for such groups of normal children showing great scholastic retardation, the high drop-out rate, and to some extent the delinquency problem, must rest with the failure of the school to promote the proper acculturation of these children. Though some of the responsibility may be shared by the larger society, the school, as the institution of that society, offers the only mechanism by which the job can be done...

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Then this Center, and its staff have committed themselves to the thesis that excellence in education must begin before the youngster reaches the graded portions of the educational enterprise.

The following statements are designed to articulate precisely how the latter is being accomplished through the vehicle of a federally funded project designed to service the needs of all four, five and six year olds in our district...

Dr. Edward B. Fort, Superintendent
Dr. Carlene Young, Project Director

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INNOVATIVE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

Title III projects are as varied as the regions and school districts wherein they originate. Projects to Accelerate Creativity or PACE as they are most commonly known, provide a means whereby communities, both large and small, may devote creative ingenuity to alleviating their needs. The Lincoln Child Development Center is one such project. There are approximately five hundred children in attendance in the nine classrooms staffed by a trained Kindergarten teacher and a paraprofessional.

QUALITY EDUCATION

The children of Kindergarten age in the School District of the City of Inkster begin their first year of formal schooling in the Center. That is, children who previously attended Kindergarten in the seven elementary schools are now brought to a centralized location for the purpose of gaining enriched quality education. Indicative of the thinking which provided much of the stimulation for such re-organization was the belief that concentration of resources, intensive specialized personnel, materials, equipment and in-service training would provide the needed foundation for future success.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Early Childhood Education Consultant

Curriculum planning and its interpretation to the teachers and parents are major functions of the Early Childhood Education Consultant. The consultant acts as the curriculum resource person for the Kindergarten teachers and plans for the coordinated learning experiences of the children. The consultant assists the teachers in evaluating the program and initiates necessary revisions and adjustments. Educational innovations will be interpreted to teachers and parents by the consultant.

The consultant functions as liason between the Center and the parents. Planned constructive parent interaction with the Center is another primary duty of the Early Childhood Education Consultant.

All phases of the program eventually require parental understanding and support. The consultant is the person who will assume the responsibility of developing a worthwhile, cooperative parent-teacher program. As a member of the Center's Interdisciplinary Team, this specialist will work cooperatively in the development of the Center's overall program.

Oral Communication Specialist

The Oral Communication Specialist is another member of the Interdisciplinary Team of specialists here in the Child Development Center. The Oral Communication Specialist is responsible for aiding the diagnosis of the educational needs of the children ranging in age from four through six years.

Specifically, he is responsible for diagnosing the educational needs of children as they relate to expressive language acquisition; and based upon these findings, establish a program that best fulfills their oral communicative deficiencies.

It is also the responsibility of the Oral Communication Specialist to prescribe for the classroom teachers, exercises and activities that will increase their knowledge of cultural variations in speaking. Hopefully, this will enrich the classroom speech improvement program, and stimulate more effective methods of instruction. These activities will extend from collaboration with other members of the Interdisciplinary Team.

Finally, it is the responsibility of the Oral Communication Specialist to consult and advise parents so they may assist their children in developing healthier expressive language patterns.

Project Psychologist

The Project Psychologist functions as a member of the Interdisciplinary Team and is responsible for:

1. Handling emotional and behavioral problems referred by the classroom teachers.

2. Counseling services for teachers and children.

3. Determination of evaluation procedure and instruments.

4. Interpretation of results to staff and parents.

5. Recommendations based on data to team and staff.

6. Suggest follow-up procedure to be implemented in the curriculum.

The Psychologist is also primarily responsible for the development of checklists or any other materials necessary for assessment of learning levels achieved at the Lincoln Child Development Center.

Learning and Materials Specialist

The role of Learning and Materials Specialist is one of working cooperatively with the staff and the team in discovering the best possible instructional materials for an innovative Kindergarten curriculum.

The duties of this role would include:

1. Establishing and maintaining an Instructional Materials Center which will serve as a research and production center.

2. Presenting and aiding teachers in the implementation of new learning and teaching theories through bulletins, staff meetings, workshops, and individual conferences.

3. Keeping teachers informed of informative workshops, lectures, etc. that will keep them abreast of new trends.

4. Maintenance of and instructions for the use of audio-visual equipment.

5. Selecting the best types of instructional materials in the classroom. The ordering, organization and distribution of such materials will also be done by the Learning and Materials Specialist.

OBJECTIVES

The Child Development Center is essentially geared towards individualization in as many aspects of the program as possible.

Individualization is one major point of focus, but there are others which serve as determinants for proposed activities. They are: (1) To discover and develop the potential ability of each child. (2) To develop feelings of autonomy and self-worth. (3) To provide experiences for developing questioning, inquiring attitudes. (4) To structure successful experiences for development of self-confidence and positive self-concepts. (5) Provide an accepting climate for expression of fears, desires, etc. (6) Develop a multi-sensory approach in terms of activities and materials. (7) Involve children and parents in meaningful experiences. Every proposed activity is evaluated in light of these goals.

UNIQUE FEATURES

Reading Program

"Kindergarteners are not too young to read" - USOE Cooperative Research ED010-058. "The Effectiveness of Teaching Reading In Kindergarten." McKee and Brzeinski.

Since individualization is one of the primary concerns of this project, it was felt that the needs of the more advanced children should be met, as well as those of the children who are not quite as advanced. The socio-economic composition of the student body, which consists of white and black children from both middle and lower class families would lead one to make the reasonable assumption that their experiences would flow from one end of the continuum to the other.

Recognition of these individual differences required that provisions be made for the ready to read or readers.

The entire curriculum (five areas of concentration) is geared toward development of those skills which will enable the children to perform successfully now and in the years to come. So in this sense, the entire program may be viewed as one of "readiness."

Boy Center

A specialized program with emphasis on gross motor activity and large muscle coordination activities has been developed especially for the boys at the Center. The rationale is based on an awareness of the socialization process of our society, whereby boys are expected to be active, outgoing, aggressive and "manly", while girls are expected to be ladylike, quiet and "nice." It would seem that the schools should make some provision to capitalize on the

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expectations of the male child instead of repressing what he has been led to believe is proper behavior for his role.

This Center is housed in the Multi-Purpose Room providing more than adequate space for these gross motor activities. Special equipment has been purchased for utilization by the boys during their regularly scheduled periods.

Some of the items are:

1. Silly Cycles
2. Skate Scooters
3. Work Benches
4. A-Frame Climber and Slide
5. Wreckers, Trucks, Bulldozers
6. Balance Boards

For many years, the nature of the school and teacher behavior have been asserted to contribute to boy's lower scholastic achievement in general, and reading achievement in particular. Expectations and attitudes have been suggested by (Dechant, 1964; Gates, 1961; Mazurkiewicz, 1960; and Preston, 1962.)

Ayres commented that "our schools, as they now exist, are better fitted to the needs and natures of the girl than of the boy pupils."

Language Laboratory

The Language Laboratory is the apex of the Oral Communications program. This facility provides each child with an opportunity to strengthen his sensitivity to the various sounds of his immediate environment, his ability to listen, as well as to develop more effective auditory comprehension of the spoken language. The Language Laboratory also provides a

situation within which a child may be exposed to the reading of selected stories, poems, fables, sing simple songs, recite nursery rhymes and record his own voice.

The physical structure of the Language Laboratory, with eighteen listening booths (carrels), provide a unique situation for each child to experience and interpret a given presentation on an individual, independent basis. This is accomplished by isolating each child from various auditory and/or visual distractions and thereby, directing his attention to the significant aspects of what is being presented.

At present four instructional tapes are being utilized. The subject matter conveyed on each tape includes "Sounds Around Us," selected short stories and fables, choral readings of nursery rhymes and simple songs by each class and Speech Improvement Lessons for each consonant sound of the language. In order to further gear the subject matter of these instructional tapes to the educational needs of the children, as well as to compliment classroom activities in the area of expressive language, two classroom teachers, the Learning and Materials Specialist and the Oral Communication Specialist meet bi-monthly to record any additional listening activities and/or stories.

Each classroom is scheduled to visit the Language Laboratory twice a week for approximately twenty to thirty minutes. Similar classroom demonstration periods are also scheduled. On Fridays, children with more severe speech problems, from each class, are scheduled to visit the Language Laboratory. During these visits, emphasis has been concentrated upon speech improvement activities.

It is hoped that the oral communication abilities of each child will be enhanced by concentrating on the development of sound auditory discrimination abilities and the heightening of sequential memory span. During each speech improvement activity, the child's response for a given exercise is monitored by the use of a light bulb response board above the central control deck. The response for each child to a given auditory discrimination exercise can be noted. Any consistently occuring errors in perception are noted and summarized in a weekly progress report to the classroom teacher. It is then their responsibility to structure classroom situations to correct these errors. The weekly classroom demonstration lessons also assist in concentrating upon these individual weaknesses.

Continuity from the intensive listening activities of the Language Laboratory to the classroom expressive language program has been greatly enhanced by providing each classroom teacher with a weekly structured outline of the Language Laboratory program. It is hoped that during the course of the week, reference will be made to activities presented in the Language Laboratory, as frequently as possible.

Para-Professionals

Para-professionals are an integral part of our program. They work directly with the children under the supervision of the teacher. The prevailing philosophy is that the skills and abilities of these adults should be utilized as much as possible and - further - that they also serve an important role as additional resource persons for the children.

In-service training sessions have been conducted by each member of the Inter-disciplinary Team. The express purpose being to familiarize the para-professionals with certain basic concepts and techniques effective

with young children as well as add to their own effectiveness in the classroom. Some of the sessions have dealt with skillful storytelling, stimulating oral communication, construction of simple games, operation of equipment, simple means of recognition and identification of problems in children and the nature of expressive language.

Para-professionals serve as members of most committees. An excellent example of this is the newsletter committee for the Lincoln Log. The art work is done by one of our very talented para-professionals who serves as a permanent member.

Teachers are also able to request the specialized services of any of the para-professionals as their planning dictates. Appropriate arrangements may be made with the teacher to whom the para-professional is assigned for her release or exchange with another for the particular period.

Another part of their services include accompanying children on the six buses which pick them up and deliver them for morning and afternoon sessions. The children are thereby exposed to interaction with several other adults daily and quickly learn to recognize and relate to them as members of their school and helpful persons.

CURRICULUM

There are five major focal points around which curriculum is built. Stress is placed on development of perceptual skills (visual and motor,) cognitive skills, language (expressive) skills, social skills and communication of attitudes and feelings.

In order to facilitate development of these skills the rooms are set up in areas related to these five. Each room has some combination of the suggested areas.

Art: Easels, scissors (straw baskets,) crayons - color coded, clay, paints, origami, cutting-pasting.

Acting-Talking:

Telephones, puppets, read-aloud stories.

Play: Blocks, games, dress-up clothes, full-size mirrors.

Writing (Perceptual):

Chalkboard, overhead projectors, mimeographed material (Frostig).

Rhythm-Music:

Piano, radio, records, instruments.

Science: Plants, turtles, terrarium, lizards, scales, aquariums, magnets, magnifying glasses.

Library: Books, pictures, story puzzles.

Outdoor: Games, garden exploring.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER

The Instructional Materials Center, which is an indigenious part of the Lincoln Child Development Center, plays an important role in the continually evolving curriculum.

The Instructional Materials Center is concerned with the selection, procurement, housing, organization and dissemination of instructional materials for the improvement of learning and instruction.

It also serves as a resource unit within the school complex. Teachers are able to use the Center for research work concerning Kindergarten teaching techniques using current professional books, periodicals, pamphlets, and reference books.

The Instructional Materials Center is a production center for individualized teaching materials stressing the areas of perceptual skills, language skills, cognitive skills, social skills and the development of the ability to communicate attitudes and feelings. Materials for overhead projectors, slide projectors, tape recorders and movie projectors may be produced as well as visual aids such as charts, teaching pictures or language games.

It is the central distributing point for commercially produced teaching materials such as films, filmstrips, slides, records, tapes, books, picture collections, models, radios and televisions. The functions of the Instructional Materials Center and the ways in which teachers may use it are many.